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A COMPARISON OF THE OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT AND GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the Joint Military Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

A COMPARISON OF THE OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF
GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT AND GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE
DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Operational leadership is a difficult concept to define. This paper develops a model for operational leadership, which lists four major responsibilities of operational leaders. After providing an historical background, this paper then uses that model to compare the operational leadership of General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee in the American Civil War.

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WHAT IS OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

"Leadership is the thing that wins wars.
I have it - but I'll be damned if I can define it" [1]
General George Patton

Operational leadership is a difficult concept to define. Perhaps it is so elusive because we attempt to define it by listing personality traits which are commonly found in successful operational leaders. Dr. Vego includes character, decisiveness, boldness, creativity, imagination, integrity, culture and technical expertise, among others, as "requirements" for successful operational leadership.[2] Other scholars say that charisma is the essence of command.[3] But, while these attributes would, of course, prove useful to the operational commander, I believe that they are neither necessary nor sufficient for successful operational leadership, and so should not be called "requirements." Consequently, they cannot be used to adequately define operational leadership.

So, how do we define operational leadership? Let's start by saying that operational leadership is simply leadership at the operational level and concentrate on defining leadership and the operational level of war.

Leadership has been defined as the "influencing of people to work toward the accomplishment of a common goal"[4] and Webster's Dictionary defines a leader as "a person who directs a military force or unit." So, an operational leader is one who influences or directs people and units under his or her (for brevity, the masculine will be used hereafter) command to achieve objectives at the operational level of war.

The operational level of war has been defined as "the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy...." [5] While the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war cannot always be neatly separated from one another[6], it is clear that there are several command echelons where operational leadership is practiced.

These definitions don't really help me understand operational leadership. In an effort to simplify this elusive concept, I have consolidated my thoughts and devised a model of operational leadership which I find somewhat intuitive.

LYNCH'S MODEL OF OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In my view, to successfully practice operational leadership, a commander must use his talents and those of his staff to ensure that four responsibilities are met. He must:

1. Develop an operational plan which will achieve operational and/or strategic objectives;
2. Communicate that plan to his subordinates;
3. Control the execution of the plan to ensure that it is properly carried out and that any necessary modifications contribute to achieving the strategic and operational objectives;
4. Ensure that his forces are adequately sustained to bring the plan, with necessary modifications, to completion.

Let's now look at each of these major responsibilities.

DEVELOPING THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

In order to develop an operational plan, the commander must first be given the strategic goals by the political leadership. The commander is then charged with "translating broad strategic goals into attainable military objectives in a theater of war."[7] Additionally, he must determine from the political leadership the resources available to him and the priority of his theater of operations. Is his the theater of focus or an economy of force theater?

Armed with this information, he can develop his operational plan. For most of this century, the United States has done this by using the Commander's Estimate of the Situation, which is defined as a "logical process of reasoning by which a commander considers all the circumstances affecting a military situation and arrives at a decision as to the course of action to be taken to accomplish the mission."[8] This is principally done by predicting the outcomes of interactions between each of the enemy capabilities (those courses of action which the

enemy is physically capable of doing, and, if done, would materially affect the accomplishment of the assigned mission) and each of our own possible courses of action. The enemy capabilities are derived by our intelligence of the enemy, and our possible courses of action are developed by the commander's staff in concert with subordinate commanders. By analyzing these interactions, the commander can assess the desirability of each possible course of action and make a decision as to which course of action is most appropriate.

Inherent in this responsibility is the need for the forces to be prepared to execute the chosen course of action. A commander ensures this by conducting training and exercises. By reaching this decision, and ensuring that his forces are prepared to execute the operational plan decided upon, the commander fulfills the first major responsibility of operational leadership.

COMMUNICATING THE PLAN TO SUBORDINATES

The commander communicates his plan to subordinates via a directive. A directive "is a military communication in which policy is established or a specific action is ordered."[9] The directive translates the decisions made in the planning phase and provides information, direction, assets and authority to subordinate commanders so that they can accomplish their assigned missions.

Additionally, it is critically important for the commander to communicate his intent to subordinates. As FMFM 1 says: "There are two parts to a mission: the task to be accomplished and the reason, or intent. The task describes the action to be taken while the intent describes the desired result of the action. Of the two, the intent is predominant. While a situation may change, making the task obsolete, the intent is more permanent and continues to guide our actions. Understanding our commander's intent allows us to exercise initiative in harmony with the commander's desires."[10] The commander's intent helps subordinates pursue the desired end state, without further orders, even when operations do not unfold as planned.[11] Effectively communicating the action to be taken and the intent of that action to

the subordinates who will implement the plan fulfills the second major responsibility of operational leadership.

CONTROLLING EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

The operational leader controls execution of the plan via a command and control structure. Command and control is the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission. Command is the act of motivating and directing people and organizations into action to accomplish missions. Control is inherent to command. To control is to regulate forces and functions to execute the commander's intent. Control allows commander to determine effectiveness and correct performance.[12]

Military operations rarely unfold as planned or expected. As Clausewitz says: "Countless minor incidents - the kind you can never really foresee - combine to lower the general level of performance."[13] A commander must be able to control his forces while they are engaged with the enemy so that he can effectively respond to developing situations.

A good command and control system will facilitate making timely and sound decisions despite the incomplete and unclear information caused by the fog and friction of war. It also allows a commander to quickly modify his decisions and relay instructions to his subordinates in a clear and concise manner.[14]

By setting up an effective command and control network and using it to shape the battle and achieve his objectives, a commander fulfills the third major responsibility of operational leadership.

ENSURING SUSTAINMENT OF FORCES

A commander ensures that his forces are adequately sustained through an operational logistics system. Operational logistics encompasses those support activities required to sustain combat power. Logistics arrangements cannot be so meager that they do not meet the needs

of the commander nor can they be so excessive that they overwhelm the ability of the commander to move, protect and employ them efficiently. The logistics system must strike a balance of sufficient support to sustain operations throughout the peaks and valley of their duration without burdening the commander with more support than is necessary to succeed.[15]

Without adequate logistics support, a major operation or campaign will sooner or later reach its culminating point before achieving all its operational or strategic objectives.[16] Too much logistical support can also hinder a commander's ability to achieve his objectives by weighing or slowing him down.

By ensuring that the right amount of logistics support is provided to the appropriate forces in the correct location and at the right time, a commander fulfills the fourth major responsibility of operational leadership.

SUMMARY OF LYNCH'S MODEL

Now, of course, these responsibilities are not unrelated, nor are they sequential. A commander sees to these responsibilities simultaneously and they are all inter-related. For example, a commander and his staff must consider communications, command and control and operational logistics when he develops an operational plan.

Some might say that this is an oversimplification of the complex concept of operational leadership. I do not mean to imply that these four responsibilities encompass all that is operational leadership, but rather, all that is operational leadership can be grouped into one of these four major responsibilities. The principles of war, elements of operational warfare, operational functions, and all the other concepts applicable to the operational level of war are used in the fulfillment of these responsibilities.

By fulfilling these responsibilities, a commander acts as an operational artist, where operational art is defined as "the theory and practice of planning, preparing, conducting, and sustaining major operations and campaigns to accomplish operational and/or strategic goals within a theater."[17]

I feel that these responsibilities provide an appropriate model for operational leadership today and, more to the point of this paper, provide an even more appropriate model for operational leadership in the 1860's, when war was a less sophisticated undertaking. For this reason, I will use this model to compare General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee as operational leaders during the American Civil War.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them."[18]

William Shakespeare
Twelfth Night, Act II, Scene 5

Anyone familiar with Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night*, recognizes that the above quote is taken completely out of context and has nothing to do with operational leadership. However, it raises an interesting question: how do individuals rise to positions of operational leadership and, more specifically, how did General Lee and General Grant rise to their positions of "greatness" as operational leaders in the Civil War?

Lee, after turning down command of the Union Army and resigning his commission, accepted a commission as Major General and Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Virginia on 20 April 1861.[19] On 10 May, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the forces of the Confederacy, though he only held this position until 8 June, when Jefferson Davis assumed direct control and Lee became his Chief of Staff.[20] Lee was thrust into these positions of operational leadership for two reasons: his experience as a soldier and his place in Southern aristocracy.

Lee graduated from West Point in 1829, ranking second in his class and having never received a demerit.[21] He had served with distinction for over thirty years in the U. S. Army, rising to the rank of Colonel. In particular, during the Mexican War, he was "consistently distinguished for skill and daring."[22]

This experience obviously had an impact on Lee's selection for positions of operational leadership. But, more important to his selection, I think, was his status as a "Virginian of the Virginians"[23] and "the quintessential Southern officer/gentleman."[24] His family had a long history of military greatness. His ancestors, Launcelot Lee fought in the Battle of Hastings in 1066 under the banner of William the Conqueror and Lionel Lee, helped Richard the Lion Hearted conquer Acre during the Crusades. On his mother's side, he was descended from Robert Bruce.[25] More recently, his father, Harry "Light Horse" Lee fought alongside Washington during the American Revolution and Lee's wife was the great-granddaughter of Martha Custis, the wife of George Washington.[26] Lee's tremendous success early in the war, particularly against a predictable General McClellan, whom he "read like a book,"[27] added to Lee's aura.

While Lee was among Virginia's "blue bloods," Grant was much more a commoner. He graduated from West Point in 1843, ranking 21st in a class of 49.[28] He served as a regimental quartermaster in the Mexican War and left the army in 1854, because he felt he could not support his growing family on an army salary.[29] He returned home and fell into obscurity.

While in the army, Grant had built a reputation as a good officer. In 1861, Confederate General Richard S. Ewell said: "There is one West Pointer, I think in Missouri, little known, and whom I hope the Northern people will not find out. I mean Sam Grant. I knew him well at the Academy and in Mexico. I should fear him more than any of their officers I have yet heard of...."[30] At about the same time, Colonel Grant assumed command of the 21st Illinois Regiment.

His success in the western theater over the next three years caught the eye of the President, who was having difficulty finding a general who would prosecute the war as aggressively as Lincoln would have liked. This led to Grant's selection to command the Union Army.

In summary, Grant had three years to grow as an operational leader before he assumed command of the Union Army, while Lee had his position thrust upon him for "aristocratic" as well as military reasons.

DEVELOPING THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

"Nothing succeeds in war except in consequence of a well executed plan"[31]
Napoleon I

In order to discuss how these two generals planned operations in their theaters, it is important to first consider their relationships with their respective political leaders.

On the one hand, Lee spent most of the war as the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia while simultaneously acting as an advisor to President Jefferson Davis, who was the commander-in-chief of the Confederate forces.[32] Lee directed only his own army and, in the words of his son, General George Washington Custis Lee, "advised the President and Secretary of War as to the movements and dispositions of other armies of the Confederacy."[33] He did not actually re-assume command of all Confederate forces until February of 1865, just two months before his surrender at Appomattox. In today's terms, Lee wore two hats: that of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of a geographic CINC in a multi-front war.

In his capacity as advisor, Lee felt that duty demanded that he suggest and obey, but never decide.[34] Lee felt that the President Davis had God-given authority over the Confederacy and nearly always sought his decisions and yielded to them. "The President from his position being very able to survey all the scenes of action, can decide better than anyone else."[35] This theme was common in many letters that Lee wrote to Davis. As Confederate General Long put it, Lee "was too thorough a soldier ... to question the wisdom of the government in forming its plan of operations."[36]

Of course, Lee did use his tremendous prestige and influence to sell his views about what *his army* should be doing to the national authorities.[37] For example, despite the fact that virtually all Southern leadership felt that the priority in early 1863 was to relieve Vicksburg,[38]

Lee sold his plan to use his army to invade Pennsylvania so that he could relieve pressure on *his home state* of Virginia. His influence was so strong that it carried the day despite the fact that the invasion of Maryland, for similar reasons,[39] only one year earlier had led to the disaster at Antietam.

Lee was in a position as advisor to the President and commander of the most capable force in the Confederacy to use his influence, prestige and the combat forces under his command to better advance the Southern cause. But, he used his position to focus emphasis on his plans in his geographic theater to the detriment of other theaters and ultimately to the detriment of the Confederacy. This is voiced clearly by Edward A. Pollard, a southern historian and contemporary of Lee, who wrote: "The fact was that, although many of General Lee's views were sound, yet, outside of the Army of Northern Virginia, and with reference to the general affairs of the Confederacy, his influence was negative and accomplished absolutely nothing."[40]

Grant, on the other hand, spent the majority of the war in the western theater where he ultimately rose to command the Department of Tennessee. His tremendous success there, particularly at Vicksburg, led to his recall to Washington where President Lincoln assigned him as General-in-Chief of the Union Army in March, 1864.

Out west, Grant was given free rein to run his campaigns. While planning his campaign against Vicksburg, he asked then General-in-Chief Halleck for guidance and received the reply, "fight the enemy when you please."[41]

Left with this latitude, Grant freed up his time to develop his plan. First, he left administrative matters to his staff. Horace Porter, one of his staff officers, said that, "he was one of the few men holding high position who did not waste valuable hours giving his personal attention to petty details.... He held subordinates to a strict accountability in the performance of such duties, and kept his own time for thought."[42] He then concentrated his own efforts on developing his plan. He worked out his plan for the Vicksburg campaign at a party in the saloon of his headquarters ship. When General McPherson offered him a drink, he replied,

"Mac, you know your whiskey won't help me to think; give me a dozen of the best cigars you can find.... I think by the time I finish them I shall have this job pretty nearly planned."[43]

His geographic isolation from Washington allowed him even more independence. Grant's plan to cut his supply lines and attack Vicksburg from the rear was not met with enthusiasm by Halleck in Washington, but a lack of telegraph line delayed the order to return until it was too late.

That was fortunate for the Union because Grant's ingenious plan led to the fall of Vicksburg on 4 July 1863. This success contributed to Grant being selected by Lincoln to command the Union Army. Upon his appointment as General-in-Chief, Grant chose to leave General Meade in command of the Army of the Potomac, the largest component of the Union Army, rather than taking it himself. This decision freed him from the details of one of his subordinate commands, allowing him to concentrate on the bigger picture.

Once in Washington, Grant was no longer geographically separated from his political leadership, but, again, Lincoln gave him free rein. "The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know.... I wish not to obtrude any restraints or constraints upon you."[44]

He set about planning the final campaign of the war at Fort Monroe in his characteristic way: "Asking that no one be permitted to follow him, he went around the warehouse and sat down on the end of a pile. Placing his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, he sat there until late in the afternoon ... work[ing] out the strategic problem."[45] His plan coordinated the efforts of Generals Sherman, Banks, Sigel, Butler, and Meade over the entire south to "work all parts of the army together, and ... toward a common center."[46] That common center was Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and his plan effectively cut off that army and forced its surrender at Appomattox.

His plan was well received by his subordinate commanders. Sherman was elated with the plan and responded by saying that, "...glad am I that there are minds now at Washington able to devise..."[47] In a later dispatch, he remarked that it "looks like an enlightened war."[48]

In summary, Lee was burdened by his political leadership, was torn between his two responsibilities (as advisor and commander of an army) and maintained too regional a focus. Grant was allowed freedom by his political leadership, maintained focus on his primary responsibility as commander of a theater and later commander of the Union Army, and maintained a big picture view of the war. These factors contributed to the failure of Lee's plans, particularly his campaigns into Maryland and Pennsylvania and the success of Grant's plans, particularly at Vicksburg and the 1864-65 campaign which culminated at Appomattox.

COMMUNICATING THE PLAN TO SUBORDINATES

"Communications dominate war."[49]
Alfred Thayer Mahan

According the Confederate Colonel W. H. Taylor, a member of Lee's staff, Lee had a great dislike for Army communications: "He did not enjoy writing; indeed he wrote with labor...."[50] For this reason, Lee usually had another staff officer, Colonel Charles Marshall, write his orders for him. Marshall was a lawyer before the war and his legal training "tended to make his sentences guarded and involved, and ambiguities crept in."[51]

Additionally, Lee tended to give discretionary orders[52] which left much to the judgment of subordinates without giving a clear concept of Lee's intent. He displayed "inexhaustible tact." As his nephew, General Fitzhugh Lee said, he had a "reluctance ... to order them [his subordinate commanders] to do anything that would be disagreeable and to which they would not consent."[53]

These conditions contributed to communications problems between Lee and his subordinates. Two of the more significant of these were Lee's orders to General J. E. B. Stuart prior to the invasion of Pennsylvania and Lee's orders to General Ewell on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Stuart was the commander of Lee's cavalry. Lee's discretionary orders enabled Stuart to recreate his famous ride around the Union Army[54] despite the fact that Lee was "disturbed

about the arrangements" and wanted Stuart's cavalry to shield his army as it moved north.[55] Having full knowledge of Stuart's desires, Lee did not adequately convey his intent and left the route into Pennsylvania to Stuart's judgment.[56]

This situation led to Lee's arrival into Gettysburg with inadequate information about the enemy. As Lee, himself, put it: "In the absence of reports from him [Stuart], I am in ignorance as to what we have in front of us here. It may be the whole Federal Army, or it may be only a detachment."[57]

Ewell was the new commander of Lee's II Corps. Lee assigned Ewell to this position after the death of the previous Corps Commander, General Stonewall Jackson, at Chancellorsville. Ewell was accustomed to the "tight-rein style of command" employed by Jackson, not to the discretionary orders that Lee would give him.[58]

Early in the Gettysburg campaign, Ewell fumed over the vagueness of Lee's orders and said: "Why can't a Commanding General have someone on his staff who can write an intelligible order."[59] Just one day later, Lee sent an order to Ewell in which he suggested that Ewell take Cemetery Hill "if practicable."[60] Ewell, unfamiliar with discretionary orders and Lee's style of command, determined it was not practicable and allowed this key, high ground to fall into Union hands.

These two instances of Lee's failure to adequately communicate his desires to his subordinates significantly reduced Lee's chance of success at Gettysburg, and consequently his chance of success during the war. Lee, himself, blamed the defeat at Gettysburg on the inadequacy or faulty timing of his own orders.[61]

Grant, on the other hand, clearly communicated his plans and intent to his subordinates. He recognized the importance of clear orders and took that responsibility upon himself. As one of his staff officers, Horace Porter, remarked, "he wrote nearly all his documents with his own hand and seldom dictated one, even the most important dispatch."[62]

His written orders were clear even under fire. In one case, a shell exploded directly in front of him while he was writing a dispatch. "He looked up from his paper an instant, and

then, without the slightest change in countenance, went on writing the message." A wounded soldier who was being carried past him remarked, "Ulysses don't scare worth a damn."[63] In another case, an order dictated under similar fire "did not bear the slightest evidence of the uncomfortable circumstances under which it was indited."[64] These anecdotes indicate the level of concentration that Grant gave to his written orders.

Despite the adverse conditions under which they were written, Grant's orders were always clear. Of his orders, General Meade said: "There is one striking feature ... no matter how hurriedly he may write them on the field, no one ever has the slightest doubt as to their meaning, or ever has to read them over a second time to understand them."[65]

In summary, Lee's delegation of order writing and use of discretionary orders caused confusion among his subordinate commanders. Grant wrote his own orders and ensured that they relayed his intent to his subordinate commanders.

CONTROLLING EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

"If officers desire to have control over their commands, they must remain habitually with them, industriously attend to their instruction and comfort, and in battle, lead them well."[66]
Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson

For all intents and purposes, Lee did not attempt to control his forces once they were engaged in battle. "I think and work with all my power to bring the troops to the right place at the right time; then I have done my duty. As soon as I order them forward into battle, I leave my army in the hands of God."[67] This lack of control is evident throughout the war. "In the Official Records of the war it is conspicuous that no sooner is battle engaged than Lee's written orders cease."[68] At Gettysburg, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Fremantle, a British Army observer, noted "that during the whole time the firing continued [on the second day], he [Lee] only sent one message, and only received one report."[69] Lee not only felt that

maintaining control was not necessary, he felt that "my interference in battle would do more harm than good."[70]

On the other hand, Grant effectively maintained control over his subordinates in battle. At Fort Donelson, when General McClernand's 1st Division had been badly defeated, Grant arrived on the scene, surveyed the situation and calmly told his division commanders, "Gentlemen, the position on the right must be retaken."[71] Realizing that "both sides were in a state of confusion, and that the one which struck first would win,"[72] Grant regained control, struck first and forced the surrender of the fort. Met with similar calamity at Pittsburg Landing during the Battle of Shiloh, he organized ammunition trains, reformed stragglers, assessed the situation at the front, ordered troop movements in support of engaged divisions and readied his forces for the morning offensive, forcing a Confederate retreat.[73]

Grant's focus and Lee's lack of focus on controlling their forces in battle contributed to Grant successfully achieving his objectives and Lee's failure to achieve his objectives.

ENSURING SUSTAINMENT OF FORCES

"The general must know how to get his men their rations and every other kind of stores needed in war."[74]
Socrates

It is not fair to compare Lee and Grant as logisticians without first looking at the strategic logistics of both sides. The South, with its agricultural base, was not well suited to supply itself with war materials for a long war. Additionally, the war was primarily fought on Southern soil, further destroying Southern supplies and infrastructure, making it more difficult to get what supplies were available to the front lines. While war materials (i.e. ammunition) were in short supply due to a lack of production capacity, food was in short supply due to a "maladministration and neglect." As one Confederate citizen said: "Why does not the President [Davis] or some proper authority order from here and other wealthy towns, and immediately at that, the thousands of provisions that fill the land? Monopolists and misers

hold enough meat and grain in their clutches to feed our army and Lincoln's!"[75] Even when these supplies made it into the Confederate Army logistics system, there was little cooperation between field generals and the Subsistence Department.[76] So, while Lee suffered as a result of a logistical system that was, in his own words, a product of "criminal neglect or gross incapacity," he exacerbated his situation by failing to exert his full authority to obtain supplies.[77]

The North, on the other hand, with its industrial base, did not have a shortage of war materials or food. More importantly, these supplies were reaching the troops. The Union Army Quartermaster General, Montgomery Meigs, had incorporated a new logistical doctrine based on the success of the French colonial forces' "flying columns" against North African insurgents.[78] Although Grant benefited from this effective logistics system, his experience as a regimental quartermaster in the Mexican War[79] further enhanced the Northern advantage.

Strengths or weaknesses of their respective logistics systems aside, both armies could be more mobile if they foraged and thus freed themselves from their logistical support. At some point during the war, both generals used foraging for this purpose in an effort to achieve an operational or strategic objective. Lee did so unsuccessfully at Gettysburg and Grant did so very successfully at Vicksburg.

During the march to Gettysburg, Lee "completely abandoned his supply lines, rather than sacrifice the troops necessary to guard them."[80] He wanted to "above all spend the summer in lower Pennsylvania ... while stripping the country of greatly needed supplies."[81] His main objective in this was to "give his people [Virginians] a respite from the ravages of war and a chance to harvest their crops...."[82] As it turned out, Pennsylvania could not provide for Lee's 89,000 man army. The presence of Union militia and partisans further aggravated the foraging effort.[83]

At Vicksburg, after months of trying to take the city from the north, Grant came to a realization. "I became satisfied that Vicksburg could only be turned from the south side."[84] So, waiting two and a half months for spring forage, he put 45,000 Union troops ashore at

Bruinsburg, 20 miles south of Vicksburg, cutting himself from his supply base.[85] These troops were given five days rations[86] and instructed to save them for an emergency and forage for subsistence.[87] Grant's men "found sufficient forage, corn, bacon and beef to provide for regular rations."[88] The Confederates were "tied to vital garrisons, including Vicksburg itself"[89] and could not inhibit the foraging or the Union advance. Within twenty days, Grant fought five battles and successfully cut off Vicksburg's supply line from Jackson, Mississippi and reestablished his own. He established a siege, and Vicksburg surrendered on 4 July 1863, the same day as Lee's defeat at Gettysburg.

In summary, Grant was given a better logistical structure to work with and his previous experience as a quartermaster enabled him to better take advantage of it. When Lee and Grant cut themselves from their logistical structures, Grant had more success because he used a smaller force (45,000 vs. 89,000), for a shorter duration (twenty days vs. "the summer"), with less competition for the forage from the enemy, to accomplish a more concrete objective (take Vicksburg from the south vs. give Virginia respite).

CONCLUSION

> *"Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise as bad and as good."*[90]
>
> Abraham Lincoln

As you may have surmised, my conclusion is that Grant was a better operational leader than Lee. I reach this conclusion in spite of the conventional historical view that Grant was a "butcher"[91] and Lee was "undoubtedly one of the greatest, if not the greatest, soldiers who ever spoke the English tongue."[92] I believe the reason that history has drawn these conclusions is that we do not have an adequate model of operational leadership. Therefore, we tend to compare personality traits, rather than objective measures of generalship to gauge

the effectiveness of operational leaders. In an attempt to make a objective comparison, I developed my own model.

While Lee had many of the "requirements" of successful operational leadership and, it could be argued, had them to a greater degree than Grant, he did not use these traits as well as Grant did to fulfill the responsibilities of operational leadership. Lee's qualities of character, boldness, culture and charisma ennobled him to his fellow Southerners and made him the personification of the Southern cause. These qualities made Lee a great man and a great leader, but not necessarily a great operational leader.

Grant, it could be argued, was less charismatic and less "noble" than Lee, but he used his talents to fulfill the responsibilities of operational leadership. This made him a better operational leader.

It seems that both Lee and Grant, themselves, agreed with this conclusion. Of Lee, Grant said: "I never ranked Lee so high as some others in the army; that is to say I never had so much anxiety when he was in my front as when Joe Johnston was in front. Lee was a good man.... The illusion that heavy odds beat him will not stand the light of history. I know it is not true."[93] Of Grant, Lee said: "I have carefully searched the military records of both ancient and modern history, and have never found Grant's superior as a general."[94]

ENDNOTES

[1] Werner W. Banisch, "Leadership at the Operational Level," Army August 1987, 51.

[2] Milan Vego, "Operational Leadership," Operational Art: A Book of Readings, 1995, 3-4.

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